Newsweek
THE MAGAZINE OF NEWS SIGNIFICANCE

Associated Press

The JFK 'mistake' in the 1961 Cuban assault is redeemed as President and nation cheer the joyful return of ....

The Brigade's Brave Men

They saw it first as a tiny dark speck in the pink-and-gold sunset burnishing the horizon at Homestead Air Force Base in Florida. The crowd had gathered before dawn, sipping coffee, nibbling sandwiches, and waiting for the planes shuttling the prisoners of war from Fidel Castro's Cuba. Now the first appeared, then faded into the rising night, and finally settled in above the silhouetted Australian pines for its landing. A woman fainted; another pressed a fist to her lips and gasped, "My God, they are really coming now."

First up the ramp to the Pan American DC-6 was a blue-uniformed U.S. Immigration Service worker, María Luisa Bolívar, a piquant Puerto Rican of 20. "*Amigos cubanos,*" she started, welcoming the Bay of Pigs POW's to freedom. Her words disappeared in the shouts: "Viva . . . viva . . ."

And then the prisoners—ransomed from Castro's jails with $53 million worth of made-in-U.S.A. drugs, medical equipment, and baby food—filed out. First, two men who had been airsick on the flight from Havana wobbled down the steps into the glare of blue lights. One whispered to Miss Bolívar the first words of the ransomed group on U.S. soil: "I'm dizzy."

After them, the river of men spilled out, taking the steps two at a time, rushing down the ramp into the bear-hugging, back-pounding *abrazos* with the countrymen waiting to greet them. One kissed the ground at the bottom of the ramp. Another pressed a prison-made wooden cross and rosary into Miss Bolívar's hands.

Shepherded into a black hangar, the men were given baths, physical exams, khaki uniforms—replacing the sport shirts and slacks Castro had issued them as they left—and $100 each. In an enlisted men's mess hall, they bolted vegetable soup, roast beef, mashed potatoes, and peas. And then they piled aboard buses for the 20-mile ride to Miami's cavernous Dinner Key Auditorium, where 5,000 friends and relatives were waiting to welcome them. The scene was tearful and tumultuous; men vaulted over police barricades, women pressed forward, and all about there were hugs, kisses, sobs, and the babble of voices: ". . . Beautiful . . . My beautiful, beautiful little kid . . . How beautiful you look, how beautiful you look . . ." There were several rounds of "vivas." And there were grim pledges: "We shall return," said Juan Figueras, 24, a Bahía de Cochinos casualty who left both legs in Cuba. ". . . We have to do it."

The 'Bonus': There were nine more planes that night and the next, Christmas Eve, ferrying the 1,113 surviving captives to freedom—most of them pallid and underfed but surprisingly healthy for their twenty months in jail. Behind them, aboard the black-hulled freighter African Pilot (which had delivered the ransom down payment to Havana), came nearly 1,000 of their relatives. Castro had ransomed them, too, as a "Christmas bonus," for which he exacted their homes, their cars, and most of their belongings.

Thus did the U.S. pay what its President regarded as a debt of honor to the men of Brigade 2506, the Cuban émigré attack-force that waded ashore in the ill-starred invasion attempt of April 1961. At the weekend, John F. Kennedy himself closed this unhappiest chapter of his two years in the White House. Journeying from his Palm Beach vacation retreat to Miami, he stepped out into the Florida sunshine bathing the Orange Bowl to review the men of the invasion brigade—and to receive their battle flag in return.

A crowd of 40,000 exiles thronged the big bowl, waving U.S. and Cuban flags and white handkerchiefs, pouring cascades of applause down around the President and Mrs. Kennedy. Once they broke into a loud chant: *"Guerra! Guerra! Guerra!"* (War! War! War!). Squinting against the sun, Mr. Kennedy threaded among the brigade survivors, shaking their hands, receiving their salutes. Characteristically, once the speeches started, he put the men at ease by suggesting that they sit down on the stadium grass. They did. But they leaped to their feet applauding when the President unfolded the battle flag of their ill-fated *"Brigada Asalto"* and shouted to the crowd: "I can assure you this flag will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana!"

For Mr. Kennedy, it was a difficult date to keep. He had approved the invasion; he had deprived it of the tacti-

cal support it needed, and when it failed he took the blame. That failure had lingered on his conscience—and the nation's—ever since.

For all that time, the captives had languished in prison. Few were manhandled by their guards—"The Communists," one said, "are careful about that"—and most seemed to have fared reasonably well. But conditions were nonetheless harsh. Prisoners were jammed into cells—as many as 175 in one two-windowed dungeon they called "the cave." Meals were erratic; macaroni was the unvarying staple for some during the last six months. "The plate of slop they call food used to be our crystal ball," said one prisoner, Ramón Cora, 33. "When the food would get better, we would say they must be making progress with negotiations."

Special treatment was reserved for Manuel Artime, the top

Associated Press

President Kennedy's IOU: 'This flag will be returned'

civilian official of Brigade 2506, spent nine months naked and incommunicado in a 6- by 9-foot cell. But few were visibly chastened by the hardships of prison life. Talk of going back was common, and Artime cried to the throng of exiles at Dinner Key: "We have come to call you with the voices . . . of our dead to war again . . ."

Name of the Game: All of this had been prickling President Kennedy's conscience. Some might object to paying Castro's ransom, some might call it blackmail. But, whatever the name, most Americans found it hard to argue with the result—the return of the Bay of Pigs survivors who had paid with their freedom for an admitted U.S. mistake.

What prompted more questions was the way that result had been accomplished. Officially, all through the long negotiations with Castro, the Kennedy Administration had been little more than a sympathetic bystander. On the record, the dealings with Fidel were in the hands of the Cuban Families Committee and New York lawyer James B. Donovan, who had arranged the Francis Gary Powers-Rudolph Abel spy swap. The President, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and Donovan all maintained this polite fiction in public. But the facts were that the Administration was deeply involved, that Donovan was in effect its envoy without portfolio, and that his mission could not have succeeded without massive government help.

The charade was necessary—so Administration officials argued—because Castro might have raised the ante or even called off the entire deal if the U.S. Government became publicly involved. For this reason, newsmen who got wind of the unorthodox Administration role were asked to keep it quiet. Not until after the last prisoners had arrived did the full story come out; when it did, it came largely from Bobby Kennedy's Justice Department in the melodramatic, blow-by-blow style reminiscent of the after-the-fact accounts of the Big Steel, Mississippi, and Cuban crises. Predictably, the squad of Justice Department officials who had participated behind the scenes emerged as the movers and shakers.

The public—led all this time to believe that the U.S. was simply an onlooker—was surprised and, in some quarters, irritated by the news. Donovan himself was moved to say that—for all the government help he got and his "enormous respect" for Bobby Kennedy—it was nevertheless "absolutely and unqualifiedly so that the policy and negotiations were entrusted to me."

It was indeed Donovan who, weary and bothered by his bursitis, shuttled between Havana, Miami, and Washington and sat across the bargaining table from the mercurial Fidel. It was Donovan who told Castro he would have to settle for medical goods and baby food and who cut the Cuban short when he haggled about the price. ("What value would you put on a drink when you're out in the field all day and thirsty, and there isn't a drop of water around?" he asked Castro. "Let's not talk about prices, let's talk about quantities.") And finally, it was Donovan who, on Christmas Eve, boarded the last plane carrying prisoners from Havana and wired ahead: "Operation Mercy regarded as completed. Merry Christmas."

Tape-Snipper: But Donovan was far from alone. He got his non-paying client, in fact, through Robert Kennedy, who suggested him to the Cuban Families Committee. Working behind the scenes was owlish Robert A. Hurwitch, a State Department special assistant who had helped work out the original abortive tractors-for-prisoners exchange proposal. His assignment—"to provide some guidance and cut the red tape."

The big push came, however, after the Cuban crisis. Castro made overtures to keep the negotiations open; he sent, by special courier, a 251-page loose-leaf book listing what he wanted in incredible detail, from one 3-cent machine part to 25 metric long tons of tranquilizers—enough, by one drug house's calculation, to unjangle every nerve in Cuba for five years. Late in November, Donovan and Families Committee officials visited Bobby Kennedy and warned him that the prisoners' health could not hold up much longer—a bit of intelligence from Cuban exile sources that led to some raised eyebrows when the sturdy-looking prisoners skipped down the ramp at Homestead.

Kennedy moved in. While Donovan lined up a committee of lawyer friends in Washington and New York, Kennedy assigned two top aides—Deputy Attorney General Nicholas DeB. Katzenbach, his man on the scene at Oxford, Miss., and Assistant Attorney General Louis F. Oberdorfer—to run the government team. Room 4143 at Justice—Oberdorfer's conference room—became the command post.

Working under a self-imposed deadline—free the men before Christmas—the team went to work around the clock. The Red Cross was brought in to pool contributions to the ransom package. Thumbing business directories and Who's Who, Donovan's private colleagues used Justice Department phones to contact manufacturers and transportation executives around the country, calling them at home, sounding them out,

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CPYRGHT 'Cuba Is Living a Moment of Terror' CPYRGHT

What is life in Cuba like today? No cream for coffee, milk only for small children, no onions, no spices, very little meat, long food queues outside Havana groceries, ration cards for food and clothing, no new shoes and few used ones. No beer after 10 a.m., whisky at $5 a shot, foul cigarettes, and poor matches. Above all, informers, sudden arrests, militia men—and women (photo)—armed with rifles and submachine guns at busy street corners.

This was the bleak picture of life in Castro's Cuba etched by the 922 relatives of the Cuban prisoners, who arrived in Port Everglades, Fla., aboard the African Pilot from Havana last week.

"Look at my children's shoes," said María Infante, whose son was among the freed prisoners, pointing to the torn and broken footwear her two youngsters wore. "I had money to buy them new shoes, but there are none to buy. The few shoes available in Cuba are given mainly to the *milicianos* [militiamen] or to the children who go to Communist schools. The stores charge $30 for a used pair of children's shoes."

"Cuba," said Mrs. Infante, "is living a moment of terror." On visits to her son in jail she was stripped and searched for concealed weapons. "My husband was put in jail for three months and left without food for seven days just for being the father of an invasion prisoner," she said.

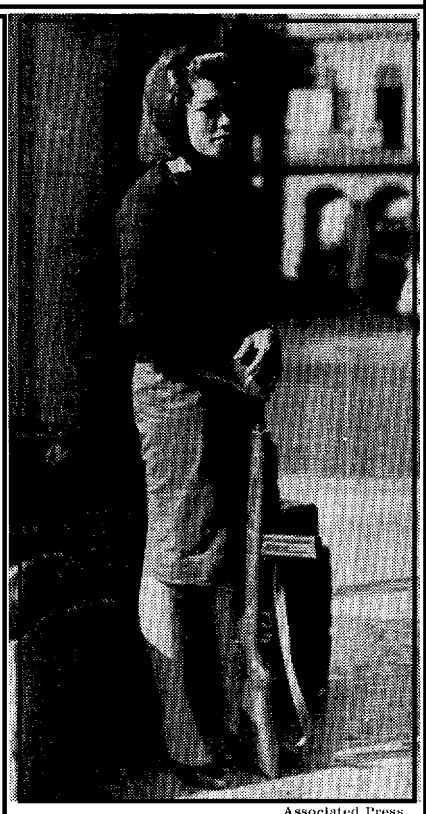
Pork and Beans: "We got six pounds of rice per person per month," reported Mrs. Elia Maceo Casanova, wife of a liberated invader. With ration cards (issued only if Cubans can prove they paid their rent), the Casanova family received a pound of beans and a quarter of a pound of meat apiece "every fifteen or twenty days." "Even Russian meat was scarce," said an ex-restaurateur among the relatives. For his café, he could get only a pound of "bad pork" a month.

In Cuba, toys too are scarce; florists' shops are barren, and liquor is in short supply. By noontime only those saloonkeepers who are members of the Communist Party or militiamen have anything left to sell to thirsty customers.

But worse than the shortages was the surveillance. Small children grew nervous when they looked up to see a member of the local Comité de Barrio (neighborhood vigilante organization) peeping in the window. Parents reported that these vigilantes tried to eavesdrop on conversations. Relatives of the invaders disappeared into jails, reappeared, and unaccountably were imprisoned again.

One refugee said: "We were fortunate to be *gusanos* [or worms, as Castro called both prisoners and their relatives]. We gusanos helped each other out and somehow we managed to come out a little bit ahead of the milicianos."

Bound by ties of persecution, the gusanos scored a few victories. When



Associated Press

Havana: Woman at arms

Castro ordered the prisoners to don yellow shirts as symbols of shame for their invasion, sympathizers in Cuba wore yellow T-shirts. Others flew strips of yellow cloth from their auto aerials until the Cuban dictator abruptly banned such displays.

One American who got an unusual glimpse of Havana last week was ransom negotiator E. Barrett Prettyman, a Washington lawyer. He casually asked Fidel Castro about Ernest Hemingway's famous home, Finca Vigía, and Castro took him on a personal tour of the rambling house which is now a museum. Among the curios: The late writer's liquor bottles, half-filled as he left them. During the tour, recalled Prettyman, "Fidel became much more relaxed and began speaking English."

Later Castro showed Prettyman a "workers' paradise" housing development, where rent is held to one-tenth of each resident's salary. There crowds swarmed around the Cuban dictator and he patted children's heads and chatted with their parents. But as the armed motorcade swept past the new Soviet-built fishing port —and past a field in which 400 Russian tanks sat idle—many bystanders appeared to ignore Fidel's presence.* "The work we are doing," Castro told his American guests, "is much more popular with the rural people, the farmers. We have not made everyone in the city happy."

Down on the Farm: But in the countryside, said the refugees, farmers went without their traditional roast suckling pig at Christmas. The reason: Unauthorized slaughter of state-owned livestock is punishable by a three- to five-year jail sentence. There were also reports that sugar mills were being torn down and cannibalized to provide parts for other mills. Cane-cutters were being exhorted to cut 12,000 *arrobas* (25 pounds to an arroba) during the "People's Harvest"—with the promise that the cane cutter who brought in the most would be awarded a "Labor Hero" medal and $100. Even with Russian technical aid, equipment breakdowns were reported in the fields and factories and on bus lines.

Those Cubans lucky enough to depart left empty-handed. Wearing their Sunday best, they passed through six successive militia check points on the Havana pier, and saw everything they owned confiscated. "They took the coat off my back and the ring off my finger," said one elderly woman. "I turned the key in the lock of my $30,000 waterfront home," added Carsiliso Rey, "handed the key to the police, and went to the ship. I came without a penny in my pocket."

Still, to 922 Cubans who left their homeland, it was worth it. "Take a good look," said Inocente Romero Mesa to his grandson as they walked down the gangplank, "you are on the verge of freedom."

*Last week hundreds of Russians sailed from Havana on a Soviet ship. But thousands of Russian "technicians" still remained.

(Continued from Page 12)
always using the polite term "exchange goods"—and never the taboo "ransom." Prospects were invited to Washington, with their inventory lists and tax experts; often, Bobby Kennedy would come down from his fifth-floor office to 4143 to deliver a pep talk: "... My brother made a mistake ..."

Most agreed to chip in. Members of the exchange team—public and private—made their pitch in measured words. "The thing we all knew," one team member told NEWSWEEK's Milan J. Kubic, "was that, win or fail, the whole operation would eventually be dissected in the press ... There were no pressure tactics whatever." Bobby himself, in his standard talk, said he was speaking as a private citizen.

Cop's Cousin: But, intentionally or not, an Attorney General playing such a role is inevitably cousin to the cop selling tickets to the policemen's ball—and just as hard to turn down. If Justice promised nothing, a drug company still could not help but remember the Kefauver investigation of drug pricing or the uproar over thalidomide. One trade association official told manufacturers—so one recalled—that "it is in our best interests to comply."

For those who went along, the major fringe benefit was the tax write-off. With the Internal Revenue Service's Mitchell Rogovin on the team, tax rulings were cranked out within hours instead of days or weeks. The key answer: Gifts in kind were deductible—at wholesale prices rather than cost—up to 5 per cent of taxable corporate income.

The 5 per cent figure for charitable contributions was fixed in law; there was also precedent for writing off donations at their market value—a 1947 court decision on a gift of wheat to the Freedom Train. In combination, the rulings meant that an item that cost $1 to produce and that had a wholesale catalogue price of $5 could be subtracted at the higher figure from taxable income. The tax saving for most companies at the standard corporate rate of 52 per cent would be about $2.50. The ultimate cost to U.S. taxpayers, by various IRS estimates, will run between $12 million and $20 million.

To avert profiteering, donors were asked—and they agreed—to pledge to keep their deductions just high enough to cover the cost of donations. The surplus, under this ad hoc arrangement, was to be distributed among donors in low-markup industries (such as food) and prospects whose donations entailed a loss they could not afford. IRS was stern. One baby-food manufacturer, for example, had already decided to phase canned food out of the market and cut the U.S. wholesale price to $1.01, compared with $1.16 for jars of identical size. The company wanted to deduct a big canned-food donation at the higher price for food packed in jars. But IRS said no, and the company went along anyway—taking the reduced $80,000 loss.

Whatever the inducements, the food, drugs, and medical gear were rounded up, and the down payment—$11 million worth—was shipped to Havana. There were maddening last-minute delays. Near the close, Castro demanded payment of the $2.9 million ransom he had set on 60 wounded prisoners released last April. Within 24 hours, the full amount was raised—$1 million of it in a single telephone call from Bobby Kennedy to an unnamed friend.

Even with this cash and a $53 million letter of credit backed by several financial institutions as a guarantee, Castro was suspicious. He held up the prisoner airlift until the first ransom shipments arrived. At one point, he effectively tied up the Havana airport with an aerobatic show by his MIG jets. Even then, the bone-tired Donovan managed one last wisp of dry wit: when the fighters roared low overhead, he said, "It's the invasion!" Castro laughed heartily.

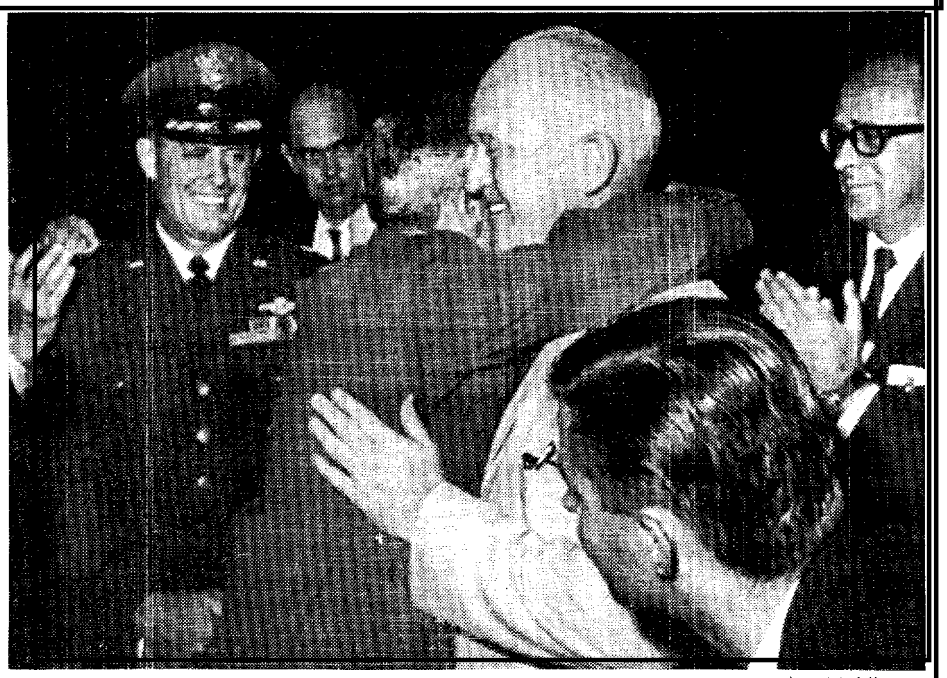
Unfinished Business: Even with prisoners and families in Florida, 80 per cent of the ransom package remains undelivered. Thus Donovan, who is still negotiating for the release of more than twenty U.S. prisoners Castro is holding, must soon go back to Havana and bargain with the fickle Fidel.

With its all-out effort, the Donovan team had rounded up $57 million worth of pledges and a reservoir of trust in Havana. But much of the available material did not jibe with Castro's shopping list, and that meant hard bargaining ahead. Fidel, for instance, demanded $14.5 million worth of baby food—far more than Donovan can come up with by the July 1, 1963, deadline for delivery. He will try to persuade Castro to let him make up the difference with other foods. Donovan's pledge list includes substantial doses of nonprescription drugs; Castro has insisted on the prescription kind.

In bargaining out the differences, the leverage will be on Castro's side. The Maximum Leader has made it clear to Donovan that the progress of negotiations for the American prisoners will hinge on delivery of the ransom goods. This could also affect the hopes of more relatives of prisoners to emigrate from Cuba to the U.S. Donovan said Castro had agreed to let 2,500 more leave when more ransom ships come in (though reports from other sources were that the Cuban dictator had reneged on this part of the agreement).

Means and Ends: After last week's triumph, a few nagging postmortem questions remained—the secrecy surrounding the government's involvement, the way it went about getting what it wanted, whether the ransom should have been paid at all. The means to the end had been thoroughly New Frontier—pragmatic, flexible, impatient, unorthodox—and effective; whether the Administration's methods were justified as well was left to some future accounting by the historians.

But the defense was, in essence, that [illegible] success. Castro



Associated Press

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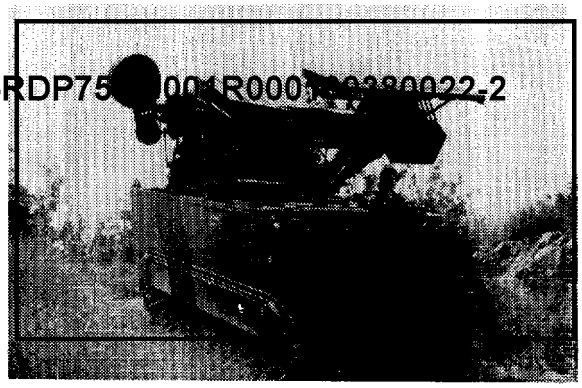
SS-11, an anti-tank missile (above), is guided from carrier



U.S. Army

Mauler is fired from a tank-like vehicle (above), protects troops from supersonic planes

Redeye missile-launcher (right) is a compact, easily handled weapon with a wicked wallop

had little to show aside from a ransom package that might help heal Cuba's sick and feed its young but could hardly sustain its desperate economy. For its part, the U.S. inevitably would quarrel about the means, but the story had a happy ending. The prisoners had come back in time for Christmas, and Americans had at least partly erased a blot on the national conscience.

THE ARMY:

Rolling

For the U.S. Army, the cold-war years often have seemed cold and warring. Stripped bare and politically orphaned in the postwar demobilization, the Army doggedly tried to regain status and stature. But at budget time, the Army invariably lost out to the other services. To many old soldiers it appeared the Army's most crucial task was simple self-preservation.

Now, thanks to new strategic emphasis on non-nuclear response to agression, the Army has been dramatically upgraded. Inside the Pentagon, Army stars are shining brightly. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, who was eclipsed as Army Chief of Staff under President Eisenhower, is now chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the most influential military adviser to the President and Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara. Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Army Chief of Staff, is high in McNamara's esteem; and Army Secretary Cyrus Vance was handpicked by the defense chief to rejuvenate the ground forces.

From a post-World War II low of ten under-strength divisions and 440,000 men in 1948, the Army has been beefed up to sixteen battle-ready divisions and 960,000 soldiers.

At a quickening pace, the new manpower is receiving new firepower. "New rifles, better personnel carriers, and improved tanks and jeeps are now in arms rooms and motor pools around the world," General Wheeler said last week. Out to the troops are going 7.6-mm. (the standard NATO size) small arms, including the M-14 rifle and the M-60 machine gun. The Davy Crockett atomic mortar is on order in quantity, and numerous new weapons are in the works. Among them:

▶A 15-ton, aluminum-armored Sheridan tank equipped to fire either Shillelagh missiles or artillery shells. Status: Operational in about five years.

▶The M-60 tank, powered by a 750-horsepower diesel engine and equipped with a 105-mm. gun, a potent answer to the Soviet's T-54 tank, with its 100-mm. gun. Status: In service.

▶Mauler, an air defense missile mounted on a tank-like vehicle to protect the Army in the field against supersonic aircraft and short-range missiles. Status: Operational in 1966 or 1967.

▶Redeye, a compact, shoulder-fired ground soldier's anti-aircraft weapon. Status: Operational by 1967.

▶Flashlight radar, a hand-held detection device which, even through thickest fog and rain, pinpoints enemy vehicular or personnel movement while remaining unaffected by fixed terrain. Status: Operational about 1965.

▶Lance, or Missile B, a ruggedly designed battlefield missile with a range of 47 miles for support of Army combat divisions. Status: Early development, operational in four to five years.

▶SS-11 missile, a French-designed anti-tank missile with fins, fired from a personnel carrier and capable of being guided horizontally and vertically by the firing unit toward target. Status: In the hands of troops.

▶Sergeant, a mobile solid-fueled missile with a 75-mile range to replace the old liquid-fueled Corporal, which now requires several hours to set up—compared with 34 minutes for Sergeant. Status: Currently being distributed to field units.

A major aspect of the Army revamping seems headed for controversy.

This involves a still-secret report calling for a five-year, $5.5 billion program to increase the airborne mobility of the ground forces. Under the plan, proposed by a special board set up by Secretary McNamara, airborne assault divisions would have more than 300 aircraft each —triple the present division allowance— and special air cavalry brigades would be equipped with 140 planes each.

The plan has engendered much resentment among Air Force partisans who —privately, so far—view it as an Army attempt to create a rival air arm. The airmen are always ready to fight for that wild blue yonder.

Nevertheless, as non-nuclear weapons regain lost glamour, the U.S. Army looks forward to a glittering future of regaining its old-time 1 million-man strength and possibly adding its seventeenth and eighteenth divisions in later years—plus its own tactical air force and battlefield missiles. Only McNamara's concern about the bloated defense budget might stand in the Army's way—but the Army was anything but gloomy. As one officer said: *"Only* the Army seems happy with the budget these days."

TRIALS:

'Toward a Gun'

Jimmy Hoffa appears to lead a charmed legal life. Four times during his five-year tenure as president of the brawny Teamsters union he has been brought into court. Three times before he has walked out a free man. In Nashville last week he escaped again.

Nine weeks in court on charges that [illegible] payoff from

Commercial Carriers, Inc., in return for labor peace, ended in a mistrial when the jury deadlocked seven to five (for acquittal). During the trial, a former mental patient tried to kill Hoffa in the courtroom with a nearly harmless air pistol. Hoffa, who was unhurt, slugged his assailant before a U.S. marshal hit the man. Asked later why he rushed at a man with a gun, Hoffa told intimates: "You always run away from a man with a knife . . . and toward a man with a gun." Further, two jurors and an alternate were dismissed after charges that Teamsters officials had tried to tamper with the jury.

The jury deliberated seventeen hours before the mistrial was declared, and Hoffa wished "everybody connected with the trial a Merry Christmas." But the stocky Teamsters head has more courtroom appointments. On Jan. 4 he is scheduled to appear in Miami to seek a change in venue, to Tampa, of another Federal case charging him with mail fraud involving a plan to use $500,000 of Teamsters money to finance a retirement community in Florida. While the Florida action is heard and a special grand jury investigates the jury-tampering charges in Nashville, the Justice Department will delay a decision on whether to retry the "payoff" case.

As Hoffa staved off the latest Justice Department action, Teamsters attorney William Bufalino crowed: "In 1962, Santa Claus just refused to put Jimmy Hoffa in Bobby Kennedy's stocking."

THE PRESIDENCY:

Ducks in a Row

The borrowed Palm Beach "White House" was a hub in a hubbub last week. Children, toys, and pets were often underfoot. And into Mr. Kennedy's vacation retreat poured a steady stream of VIP's: Secretary of the Treasury Dillon, Secretary of Defense McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Kermit Gordon, the new Budget Director, Walter W. Heller, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and a clutch of aides to thrash out the budget.

But when the President, his family, and his guests piled into cars and headed for an afternoon aboard the yacht Honey Fitz, Mr. Kennedy's dark-haired personal secretary, Evelyn Norton Lincoln, remained behind. For her, the departure meant a welcome "chance to get something done."

Throughout the morning, the working part of the President's holiday, Mrs. Lincoln, dressed in summery gray-and-white striped cotton, had been typing, answering the phone, and sorting vital papers in her temporary, cramped, ground-floor office. The rest of her day—except for lunch with her husband, Harold (a Veterans Administration official)—would be devoted to more of Mr. Kennedy's work.

Like dozens of other trips on which Mrs. Lincoln has traveled 117,783 miles at Mr. Kennedy's side, this one to Florida was mostly desk duty. So important is Mrs. Lincoln that the President himself can feel her influence even when she isn't around—on weekends in Virginia, for example. For this self-effacing, dedicated woman in her mid-40s bears one of the most delicate yet little-known responsibilities of any of the people around the President. It is she who packs the President's "little black bag," the fifteen-year-old, black alligator briefcase he takes with him on trips and over weekends.*

On every level of government, New Frontiersmen vie to get their ideas into

Newsweek

Mrs. Lincoln: 'Little black bag'

that black bag. One says: "What goes into that briefcase on any given weekend may affect the course of history."

As the custodian of the briefcase, Evelyn Lincoln is wooed by officials great and small on the eve of a Presidential departure. "When does his helicopter take off?" asks a Cabinet officer. "How much time do I have to get something there in time for the briefcase?" Yet Mrs. Lincoln herself insists she really doesn't exercise any personal discretion about the contents. "The President wants to see everything," she says. "He even rummages around my desk looking for things that may have been left out."

Unobtrusive: In the White House office, Mrs. Lincoln demonstrates an unerring instinct about whom the President really wants to see or talk to on the phone. But her methods are quiet and unobtrusive. "She may be talking to Peter Lawford one minute, arranging tickets for him, or to Prime Minister Macmillan the next, telling him the President will be available in a few minutes," recalls a colleague. "She has no consciousness of rank—theirs or hers—and treats them all alike."

From her green-carpeted office, Mrs. Lincoln can see the President at his desk. When he needs her, he presses a buzzer or walks into her office. She never buzzes him. If there's a telephone call for Mr. Kennedy and he is chatting with a visitor, she discreetly jots the caller's name on a slip of paper and takes it to his desk. He may then punch one of the eighteen buttons on his desk phone to take the call. (Only VIP's can get through the White House switchboard to Mrs. Lincoln's desk.)

If the President's door is closed, Mrs. Lincoln can peep in through a tiny hole in the door. "That way," she explained, "I can tell at all times whom he is talking to [most visitors enter through the office of Appointments Secretary Kenneth O'Donnell] and how near the conference is to breaking up." For the unwary, though, the peephole can be dangerous. Once Special Assistant Arthur Schlesinger Jr. put his eye to it, but the weight of his head pushed the door open, leaving the prize-winning historian red-faced in the open doorway.

Going Places: Mrs. Lincoln became Mr. Kennedy's girl Friday almost by accident. She was working for a Georgia representative when Congressman Kennedy caught her eye. "I just thought he looked as if he was going places," she recalls, and so she enlisted as an unpaid volunteer in Mr. Kennedy's first Senate campaign. When he was sworn in as senator in 1953, she became his personal secretary.

Mrs. Lincoln works from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., first laying out the President's daily schedule and a pile of papers requiring immediate action. Then comes the daily procession of great and small, including Caroline Kennedy, who sometimes hides under her desk to escape a Secret Service bodyguard.

For lunch, Mrs. Lincoln has a tray sent up from the Navy mess downstairs ("It's restful here at noontime"). She's always last to leave at night, having made sure that no papers remain on the President's desk, because of security—and because Mr. Kennedy likes a clean desk.

This office routine is varied with the

*The ordinary briefcase is unlocked by [illegible] the bag only to Mr. Kennedy himself.